

Five Foot Steps

by Rich Burlew



OK, well, let's get started then. Welcome all to the first session of our new D&D group.

You all know me, Doug, your trusty Dungeon Master. But a lot of you don't know each other, so why don't we, like, go around and introduce yourselves.

Oh, and tell everyone what type of character you're playing, OK?

Um, OK, well, my name is Kristen. I've never played before, so go easy on me.

Oh, and I'm playing a rogue, I guess. She's a halfling, like Frodo. I named her Kylie.

I am Liana. My character is Te'rea Darkshadow, an elven necromancer shrouded in darkness. Beware the dark secrets that lie in her dark and mysterious past.

You said the word "dark" like 4 times there.

Silence, mortal.

Hey, nice to be playing with you guys. My name's Ramon, and my character's name is Marcius Luis de'Ferdici, human swashbuckler extraordinaire.

Having been raised in an orphanage where the headmaster was secretly his evil uncle Domius, Marcius started his life with not

Uh, Ramon, let's save that stuff for another time.

I'm Jim, I work with Doug. My guy is a half-orc barbarian, he kicks ass.

Heya. My name's Zaid, I'm playing a cleric with a 22 Wisdom at 1st level.

Gah! Is that all you can say about your characters? Stats and boasts?

Where is the flavor? The background info? I wrote 17 pages about Marcius, and I've only gotten to his 9th birthday! Your characters don't even have any names!

Hey, hey, calm down, man.

Yeah, relax. I know it's popular to assume that just because I like to optimize my characters, I must be utterly incapable of roleplaying, but that's simply not the case.

I assure you my character has a rich background story waiting to be weaved into the tapestry of Doug's campaign. And he most certainly DOES have a name.

OK, I'm sorry, I guess I just overreacted. So what are your characters' names?

McCleric.

Fighty Stabsalot.

GAH!!

Yeah, uh, so does my guy.

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Kristen, it's your turn. Zaid, you know the rules the best, so try to help her through her first combat here.

Sure, Doug.

There're three goblins in front of Kylie. Marcius is fighting one, the other two haven't reacted yet.

You want to charge and get your sneak attack damage in.

Um, OK, uh, charge, I guess.

Kylie rushes into battle, short sword drawn and ready to catch a goblin unaware.

Roll a d20.

A twenty-sided die.

A what?

Huh?

The sort of roundish one.

Oh.

Is a twelve OK?

My what?

Your Base Attack Bonus, geez. Did it hit the goblin's AC?

Depends. What's your BAB?

The goblin's AC? Why on earth would I want to attack the goblin's air conditioning? Is it really hot in the cave?

Sigh. AC stands for Armor Class.

Oh.

Yes, Kylie swings her little sword as hard as she can and connects with the goblin's shoulder.

OK, now roll damage.

How?

Roll a d4.

Which one?

The pyramid-looking one.

Three.

OK, now roll sneak attack damage. That's a d6, the cube.

That's just a regular die. Why not just say, "Roll a normal die"?

Because it's not how we do things! Now just roll it it!

Five.

So you did 8 hp total.

Eight what?

hp, hp! Hit points! For crying out loud, were you paying any attention when Doug explained the rules of the game to you??

I paid enough attention to realize that "hp" and "hit points" have exactly the same number of syllables. So there's no reason whatsoever to say "hp" out loud unless you are deliberately trying to mess with the new girl, or unless you happen to be a complete jackass.

You have learned much, grasshopper.

Ever since they got rid of THACO, new players have got no love for needlessly esoteric abbreviations.

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Finished! The town of Greenhill, the most complete and detailed work of roleplaying art I've ever created!

This will serve as their base for the rest of the campaign. I've detailed every building, every inhabitant. There's at least three dozen adventure hooks just waiting for them!



The next day
10:09 am

And so, your team arrives in the town of Greenhill.

Nice! I love exploring towns, they're a great opportunity for some serious roleplaying.



You see that the are

Does it have a tavern?

Yes, three in fact. The largest is I head for the closest.



10:17 am

I step up and order six ales.

I don't know what the rest of you are drinking.



10:41 am

I look her up and down and slur, "Honey, I don't care if you ARE the sheriff, I wouldn't—"



10:55 am

So...jailbreak?

Agreed.



11:12 am

If only we had something highly flammable...



11:28 am

RUN! RUN!!!!



11:34 am

As you hide in the hills and watch the town of Greenhill burning to the ground, you reflect on how you will never be able to return here. Ever.



Well, that was fun.

Yeah, but let's get on to today's adventure. I bet Doug has something really cool planned for us, right?

11:58 am

Doug sure has been in the bathroom a long time.

Does anyone else hear weeping?



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Which is why my character doesn't need to blink.

Ever.

Fascinating.

Hey Kristen, is Kylie still standing in the doorway?

Um, yeah. Why?

I can also explain why McCleric can see things just as clearly while asleep as he can awake.

See, the only skill penalty associated with sleeping is to the Listen skill.

OK, then, here's a secret note for you. Don't tell anyone what it says, then pass it to Liana.

But I've read your character sheet while you were in the bathroom, and you don't have any bonuses higher than +14 for Hide.

The die reads 4, which grants a total of 22.

A +18 bonus?? What the heck is going on?

Let's see... I rolled a 10, so that gives me a total of...31.

And since it never says in the rules that my eyes need to be closed to—wait, did you just say you got a 31??

Yeah.

Does my character see anything going on with Kylie or whatever Liana's elf is named?

No, they appear to be standing in the room normally.

I try using Detect Magic on them.

Detect Evil?

Sense Motive??

Hey Doug, Jim rolled a 5, but I got a 51. So can you pass the Monster Manual?

GAAAAH!!

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing.



I don't know what's going on, but the whole party is affected!

I cast Protection from Evil, and Sanctuary, and...I don't know, Hide from Undead!!

I sprinkle the ground around me with caltrops! And holy water!

And unholy water, for that matter!

WHEN YOU GET THIS NOTE, ROLL A d20 AND ADD YOUR BIRTHDAY. THEN SIT BACK AND WATCH THE FUN.
—DOUG